

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 043593
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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 043593

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: MORNING SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT REPORTS

1. CONCORDE: TOUGHEST FRENCH DEMARCHE YET

FOREIGN MINISTER DE GUIRINGAUD TOLD AMBASSADOR RUSH FEBRUARY 25 THAT AN UNFAVORABLE US DECISION ON THE CONCORDE'S LANDING RIGHTS AT NEW YORK WOULD PRODUCE "THE WORST PROBLEM IN FRANCO-AMERICAN RELATIONS SINCE THE WAR" AND WARNED THAT THE SECRETARY AND PRESIDENT CARTER SHOULD NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE DEPTH OF FRENCH FEELING ON THIS ISSUE.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 STATE 043593

GUIRINGAUD SAID AN UNFAVORABLE DECISION WOULD:

--BE INTERPRETED BY FRENCH PUBLIC OPINION AS BASED ON
COMMERCIAL RIVALRY, NOT ENVIRONMENTAL PRINCIPLES;

--MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR PRESIDENT GISCARD TO MAINTAIN
HIS CURRENT POSITION ON NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION; AND

--RISK BRINGING DOWN THE CHIRAC GOVERNMENT.

AMBASSADOR'S COMMENT: THIS IS THE BLUNTEST, MOST IMPASSIONED DEMARCHE I CAN RECALL IN OUR DISCUSSIONS ON CONCORDE, HERE OR IN LONDON. IT MEANS THE GOF IS NOT AT ALL REASSURED BY THE EXCHANGE BETWEEN GISCARD AND PRESIDENT CARTER. WE -- ED IN NO UNCERTAIN TERMS THAT THE GOF CANNOT ACCEPT THAT THE CONCORDE JFK DECISION IS ONE FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO DETERMINE, BUT CONSIDERS IT AN AFFAIR OF STATE OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE TO THE PRESIDENT, THE STABILITY OF THE REGIME, AND FRANCO-US COOPERATION IN OTHER AREAS. (CONFIDENTIAL) PARIS 5724, 2/25.)

2. FRENCH WANT TRILATERALISM WITH EC, NOT NATO

FRANCOIS DE LABOUYALE, DIRECTOR OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS AT THE QUAI D'ORSAY, HAS TOLD EMBASSY PARIS THAT FRANCE IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE INFLUENCE OF "TRILATERALISM" IN THE NEW US ADMINISTRATION BECAUSE IT APPEARS TO REGARD NATO, RATHER THAN THE EC, AS THE EUROPEAN CORNER OF THE TRIANGLE. LABOULAYE SAID PRESIDENT GISCARD FEELS STRONGLY THAT THE EC MUST REPRESENT EUROPE IN THE PARTNERSHIP. HE ADDED THAT GISCARD HAS TOLD QUAI OFFICIALS HE WILL NOT ATTEND THAT PORTION OF THE MAY SUMMIT MEETING WHICH DEALS WITH A NATO SUMMIT, ALTHOUGH HE WILL PARTICIPATE FULLY IN THE ECONOMIC PORTION. (CONFIDENTIAL) PARIS 5472, 2/24.)

3. SPANIARDS TOLD THE GOLD WAS SOLD CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 STATE 043593

EMBASSY MADRID REPORTS THAT THE LOCAL PRESS HAS PUBLICIZED A SEMIOFFICIAL STUDY WHICH CLAIMS THE SOVIET UNION OWES SPAIN NOTHING FOR THE GOLD THE SPANISH REPUBLIC DEPOSITED IN MOSCOW DURING THE CIVIL WAR. ACCORDING TO THE STUDY, THE GOLD WAS SOLD ON THE REPUBLIC'S INSTRUCTIONS TO PAY FOR ARMS AND OTHER IMPORTS. THE STUDY CLAIMS FRANCO PERPETUATED "THE MYTH OF THE MOSCOW GOLD" TO ACCOUNT FOR HIS GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC SHORTCOMINGS AND TO FORESTALL THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE USSR. IT DOES NOT EXPLAIN, HOWEVER, WHY THE SOVIETS NEVER MADE THIS KNOWN.

EMBASSY COMMENT: THIS ACCOUNT TENDS TO UNDERCUT SPANISH CONSERVATIVES WHO USE THE GOLD ISSUE TO OPPOSE TIES WITH MOSCOW. IT MAY COME AS A RELIEF TO SPANISH DIPLOMATS WHO FACE THE UNINVITING TASK OF PERSUADING THE SOVIETS TO REPAY OVER 500 TONS OF GOLD, BUT IT IS UNLIKELY TO DISPEL THE POPULAR FEELING HERE THAT THE USSR STILL OWES SPAIN SOME-

THING. (CONFIDENTIAL) MADRID 1413, 2/24.)

4. ERITREA: GOING BADLY FOR ETHIOPIA

CONSULATE GENERAL ASMARA REPORTS THAT THE MILITARY SITUATION IN ERITREA IS GOING BADLY FOR THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. DURING THE PAST YEAR, ADDIS ABABA POURED IN MORE TROOPS, BUT:

--LOST CONTROL OF VIRTUALLY ALL THE PROVINCE'S ROADS;

--ABANDONED OR LOST MANY OUTLYING TOWNS OR OUTPOSTS;
AND

--SUFFERED SHARP SETBACKS IN THE FEW COMBAT OPERATIONS IN WHICH ITS TROOPS HAVE ENGAGED.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 STATE 043593

THE POSITION OF THE INSURGENT FORCES HAS CORRESPONDINGLY IMPROVED, AND WILL BECOME EVEN STRONGER AS SUPPORT FROM THE SUDAN BEGINS TO MAKE ITSELF FELT LATER THIS YEAR. NEVERTHELESS, THE CONSULATE BELIEVES THE MILITARY ADVANTAGE STILL RESTS WITH THE EPMG, NOTING THAT:

--CONTINUING FACTIONAL DIVISIONS WILL LIMIT THE INSURGENTS' MILITARY EFFECTIVENESS.

--THE GOVERNMENT FORCES CAN "CONSOLIDATE," ABANDON OUTLYING AREAS, AND DENY THE KEY TOWNS TO THE REBELS INDEFINITELY.

THE DECISIVE MILITARY FACTOR WILL BE THE MORALE AND LOYALTY OF THE GOVERNMENT TROOPS, WHICH--UNLESS A SINCERE INITIATIVE FOR A NEGOTIATED ERITREAN SETTLEMENT IS UNDERTAKEN--COULD COLLAPSE COMPLETELY. (CONFIDENTIAL) ASMARA 152, 2/24.)

5. MOZAMBIQUE ADMITS ACUTE FOOD SHORTAGES

EMBASSY MAPUTO REPORTS THAT FOOD SHORTAGES IN MOZAMBIQUE ARE REACHING ALARMING PROPORTIONS, AND WILL PROBABLY WORSEN IN A FEW WEEKS WHEN THE HEAVY FLOODING IN THE SOUTH MAKES ITS IMPACT FELT IN THE MARKETPLACE. THE GPRM MADE ITS FIRST PUBLIC ADMISSION OF THE SHORTAGES FEBRUARY 24, PLACING THE BLAME ON SABOTAGE BY THE FLEEING PORTUGUESE. THE EMBASSY NOTES, HOWEVER, THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS DONE LITTLE TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEM, AND THE GPRM'S DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION HAS TOLD AMBASSADOR DE PREE MOZAMBIQUE NOW HAS NO CHOICE BUT TO ASK SOUTH AFRICA FOR EMERGENCY

FOOD DELIVERIES. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE) MAPUTO 185, 2/25.)

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